

# THE AMBASSADOR

BRINGING NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TO THE WORLD



## In This Issue...

Read about Tea Dolls and Blue Eyes

## Did You Know

North America's longest running annual winter carnival, 5 Wing Winter Carnival, held at 5 Wing Goose Bay, celebrates its 62nd anniversary in February 2007.

An exotic iced cloudberry wine, made from Labrador bakeapples, earned Rodrigues Winery a Gold Medal from the Fruit Wines of Canada Competition in 2001.

The week-long Labrador Creative Arts Festival is one of Canada's oldest running children's festivals celebrating the arts through plays, storytelling and art workshops.

A new performance space for the arts is being constructed for eastern Labrador by a joint federal/provincial government partnership.

The Sheshatshiu Innu Summer Festival, held in late August on the shores of the Northwest River, features Innu culture, food, crafts, and music.

Labrador has one of the largest caribou herds in the world: the George River Caribou Herd.

The Voisey's Bay Nickel Project in Labrador is one of the world's richest nickel discoveries.

Labrador's northernmost settlement, Hebron, was founded as a Moravian mission in 1831 and disbanded in 1959.

## START / FINISH



Photo: 53 North Magazine (Labrador West)

## CAIN'S QUEST:

### Canada's Premier Snowmobile Endurance Race

"The race was everything I expected to be, and more. It was the experience of a lifetime!" — Gerard Rumbolt

It's a race across the wilds of Labrador and gives "extreme" sports a whole new meaning.

Last spring fifteen teams entered Cain's Quest, Labrador's inaugural snowmobile endurance race, and Canada's longest and most remote and arduous. Anticipation is high this year with a near doubling of everything: the number of team challengers, the length of the route, and the size of the prize: a whopping \$40,000.

It's a race where adrenaline-seekers need navigational know-how and nerves of steel (better make that stainless steel, as temperatures are likely to dip to minus double digits) as they speed across hilly terrain and frozen lakes, through boreal forests and the deep snow of interior Labrador, a place they say God gave to Cain: rough, remote and remarkably beautiful.

"We can get some nice weather but we can get extreme low temperatures, nobody knows that time of year," says organizer Todd Kent. With each team of two required to carry arctic sleeping bags, an arctic stove, and snowmobile boots rated for -40 celsius, this race is not for the faint of heart. "It'll bring new meaning to the word endurance."

Last year's champions, Gerard Rumbolt and John Efford, say this made-in-Labrador event offers hard-core snowmobilers the chance to test their mettle. "The race was everything I expected to be, and more," says Rumbolt. "It was the experience of a lifetime!"

The March 2007 race will be approximately 2,000 kilometres in length. Teams will have up to eight days to

complete the adventure that begins and ends in Labrador City, and threads through the vast interior to Churchill Falls and Goose Bay and back with mandatory layovers and checkpoints along the way. Registration packages have been sent as far away as Alberta and the northeast United States and the race's first American team has already thrown down the glove in competition.

Safety figures large in the race. "We'll cut registration at about 40 teams," says Kent, adding that it is logistically hard to accommodate more than that. "That's 80 people. Then we have our hundreds of volunteers on the trail. That's a lot of people to look after." Helicopters will scout part of the route in advance to ensure the snow machines can get through the area, while express checkpoints will be used to route challengers around potential hazards such as bad river ice.

Each team is equipped with satellite tracking devices, an exciting feature that allows snowmobile enthusiasts to track their favourite team online. "It brought the race into everyone's home," says Kent of last year's race.

And through SnowTrax Television, the race will be aired on both TSN and OLN networks bringing tremendous exposure across North America and highlighting Labrador as a premier snowmobiling destination.

Meanwhile, Rumbolt and Efford are preparing for a new race. "To prove we can do it," says Rumbolt, "and to defend our title."

[www.cainsquest.com](http://www.cainsquest.com)



## Rediscover a national gem: Battle Harbour

Photo: Alison Dyer

www.battleharbour.com

Standing on the headlands of a tiny island, 17 kilometres out in the Labrador Sea, is an extraordinary sight: a perfectly-restored, red-roofed village seemingly frozen in time. This is Battle Harbour, a resettled and restored 18<sup>th</sup>-century community.

Established as a base by a British mercantile salt-fish company in the 1770s, Battle Harbour became the economic and social hub of Labrador. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell built the first hospital in Labrador there. And it was from Battle Harbour that arctic explorer Robert Peary wired "The Pole is ours" to the New York Times.

With the resettling of the outpost in the 1960s, and the decline in the inshore fishery in the '90s, the site later became the property of the Battle Harbour Historic Trust (BHHT). After a decade-long monumental restoration project which included the mercantile buildings, St. James Anglican church, the Grenfell clinic, homes, flakes, wharves, and walkways, Battle Harbour was designated as a National Historic Site. In 1999 it became a National Historic District, a distinction it shares with only one other community in Atlantic Canada, that of Lunenburg. In 2003, National Geographic and Conservation International honoured it with a World Legacy Award.

Today, Battle Harbour represents the only intact salt-fishing village left in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. And for the visitor who lands there during

the season (June through September), Battle Harbour delivers the ideal hybrid adventure/cultural experience.

Once at Battle Harbour, you can fill your boots gazing at a parade of icebergs, searching out killer whales and humpbacks, hiking the nearby deserted islands, or taking interpretative tours of the village buildings, each redolent with its own characteristic smell of salt and twine. In the evening, you can lay your head down in one of several meticulously restored heritage homes. Yes, you can actually stay overnight in designated historic buildings. "It's the only national historic site in Canada where you can do that," says Gordon Slade, BHHT's managing director.

And that, he says, changes the whole experience. "It allows you to reflect on something in a different way than just viewing it and walking away. You're sleeping, eating, looking out the windows as opposed to looking in the windows."

"It's completely authentic," says Slade. "It's not a reconstruction, like (Nova Scotia's Fortress of) Louisbourg. These buildings have been standing on this headland since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It's not really any different today than it was when the first Europeans arrived." In this setting of no televisions, telephones, or streetlights, visitors can be whisked away, like a time traveller.



Walkway leading to the Battle Harbour saltfish mercantile buildings  
Photo: Alison Dyer

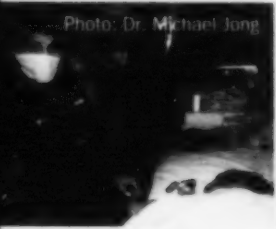


Photo: Dr. Michael Jong

## Practice makes perfect for northern doctors

About the only thing Michael Jong knew about Labrador when he first arrived was that he knew nothing at all. But the people of Happy Valley-Goose Bay opened their homes and their hearts to the young doctor and now, twenty-four years later, he's still there. Since one of the biggest challenges facing rural areas is not just attracting but keeping doctors, that makes him something of an anomaly. But that's not the only thing that makes Jong stand out. When he first arrived there were only five doctors in the area. Now, largely through his efforts, there are sixteen, even though the population has remained relatively stable. Considering the steady decline in the proportion of rural doctors all across Canada it's a remarkable achievement. Yet Jong makes accomplishing such a feat sound simple.

"You cannot fall in love with someone until you meet them and people have to come here to fall in love with it," he says. That's the thinking behind a program run through the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University that allows people to do just that. Since 1998 doctors have had the opportunity to do an eight-

month residency in Northern Family Medicine at the Labrador Health Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. In addition to regular on-the-job training they are taught outdoor survival skills and learn from native elders in their own environment. Eighty per cent of the residents who take advantage of the program go on to practise medicine in a rural or northern setting and all but three of the family doctors currently practising in Goose Bay trained in Labrador.

But it's not just in training and retention that the Labrador hospital stands out. The quality of care has improved dramatically as well, as shown by the steep decrease in infant mortality. Part of that improvement is technology based.

"Because of video resuscitation I've saved three lives on the coast this year," says Dr. Jong. Clinics in outlying communities are equipped with video cameras that feed back to his home base in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, allowing him to oversee and direct procedures from a distance. "I can conduct this from a distance and it's easier to get perspective on the

screen because I can see everything and zoom in and focus down."

Dr. Dennis Rashleigh came to Happy Valley-Goose Bay as a resident in 1999 and then returned two years later to practice. He admits he couldn't imagine trying to practice medicine without the Internet for information and consultation, but it's the personal touch that makes the job worthwhile.

"People don't want to be referred out because of the cost. So we have to be comfortable doing everything here. We deal with all their problems from birth to death and we really get to know our patients and their families."

Rashleigh also appreciates being in a teaching hospital which keeps him learning; but there's one more factor he cites when discussing why he has made Labrador his home for the last five years: "The winter here is gorgeous," he says with a smile.

# Labrador 'Blue Eyes'

## charming the world

2008-01574/

It's a stone that, when cut and polished, winks at you. No wonder it's charming builders and buyers around the world.

Labrador Blue Eyes is a prized dimension stone (i.e. a natural building stone) known for its iridescent, luminous quality and is the centerpiece of TUC Enterprises of Nain, a business owned by the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (LIDC). Today TUC, which quarries the stone in northern Labrador, is successfully chiseling out an expanding global market.

Dimension stone is one of the most impressive and enduring features of cities (think cathedrals and parliament buildings). Not surprisingly, it is a highly competitive industry. But Mike Voisey, LIDC's general manager, says there is no real comparison between Blue Eyes and other dimension stones. "There are more blue crystals in a twelve-inch square of our stone than in any other on the market."

Blue Eyes is a light-grey granite imbedded with Labradorite, a semi-precious gemstone whose shimmering violet-blue hues are only revealed with light and movement. (According to an Inuit Legend, the northern lights became imprisoned in the rocks of Labrador, and while a shaman later freed them, some lights hid and can only be discovered with the help of sunlight or water.) It's this extraordinary optical phenomenon, in addition to its strength, which appeals to designers and architects.

Formed in 1992, TUC quarries the stone at Ten Mile Bay, near Nain, and ships it in ten-to-twenty tonne blocks to Italy. Once there, the blocks are slabbled, sawed and polished by craftsmen. The finished stone is promoted to the international community by Tunnet Inc., a joint Labrador/Italian marketing company.

TUC has more than doubled its production capacity since 1992 and, in 2001, with the discovery of Arctic Rainbow, a brownish granite with similar playful properties to the lustrous Labradorite, opened a second quarry in nearby Iggiak Bay. A new plant, manufacturing monuments and countertops, opened in Hopedale in northern Labrador in 2002.

"We're new on the block," says Voisey, explaining that their secondary processing operations are still at the experimental stage. Realizing the need to sharpen their skills to compete in this end of the business, the LIDC sent some of their key craftspeople to Italy to learn the trade. Recently they invited Canadian leaders in the monument business to visit the plant to see the dazzling stone for themselves. "They're excited," says Voisey.

The future looks bright for TUC and its charismatic rock. With enough Blue Eyes at the quarry site to last at least another 50 years, there'll be a lot of Labrador shining in buildings around the world.



# Red Bay Historic Site

## preserves Europe's past

[www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/redbay/index\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/redbay/index_e.asp)

If you want to learn about shipbuilding in 16th-century Europe, you don't have to cross the Atlantic. In fact, visitors from Europe are coming to a previously little-known location on the south coast of Labrador to explore that aspect of their own history. That's where the Red Bay National Historic Site is located.

In the 1500s whale oil was used for everything from lighting to cosmetics, and Basque whalers came to the Strait of Belle Isle in the hundreds to hunt Right and Bowhead whales. Not all of the ships returned to their home port safely: the San Juan sank in Butus (as Red Bay was known in the Basque language) in 1565. Declining stocks led the whalers to abandon the hunt in the early 1600s and Red Bay was left undisturbed until the 1970s when archeologists uncovered extensive evidence of whaling, including a galleon they believe to be the wreck of the San Juan.

The site, both on land and under sea, was explored, documented and preserved. The galleon was dismantled and brought to the surface and

documented with photos and drawings. Scale models were built and the ship itself was returned to its ocean home, allowing it to be preserved for future study. As well as the San Juan, the site at Red Bay boasts thousands of artifacts discovered in trawlers, where the whale oil was processed, cooperages where barrels were made and a cemetery containing the remains of about 140 whalers. Red Bay's collection of well-preserved Basque artifacts is thought to be the best of its kind in the world.

Now Red Bay is on the short list of Canadian nominees for world heritage status with UNESCO. Cindy Gibbons, Parks Canada's Site Supervisor, is in charge of preparing the submission, which, she says, must show evidence of international significance that is unique in the world.

"This was a period of transition in ship building. These were the first ocean going vessels. New squared off sterns and rudders all happened in the sixteenth century and this vessel is a documentation of these

changes," she explains. "The evolution in ship building allowed the colonization of North America and that is the international significance of this site."

However, because of the extensive artifacts that have been discovered, the site is also of great local importance.

"It's extremely significant to Canadian history. Combined with the archival work in Basque country it gives a complete picture of life in Atlantic Canada," she says.

If all goes as hoped, Red Bay will be accepted onto the UNESCO list by 2011 or 2012, a worthy companion to the Great Wall of China, Stonehenge, the Acropolis and other world treasures.



Photo: Alison Dyer



# Innu Tea Dolls:

## A Practical Collectible

[www.craftcouncil.nf.ca](http://www.craftcouncil.nf.ca)

In her modest home on the banks of Lake Melville, master craftsperson Angela Andrew relaxes with her sewing. The living room is stifling hot and a caribou skin hangs from the ceiling behind the woodstove. The intense heat is part of the curing process that renders the skin soft and malleable. Andrew uses caribou skin to make moccasins, as well as for her highly sought-after Innu Tea Dolls.

Until the mid-1950s, the aboriginal Innu of Labrador were nomadic, moving inland in the winter months to hunt caribou. Everyone in the family would help out on that long trip into the bush, including the children. They would carry dolls stuffed with black tea as a back-up supply. Moss could be used to refill the dolls until the Innu replenished their provisions at a trading post. Today, the functional has become collectible as a small number of Innu craftspeople keep the doll-making tradition alive.

Andrew became interested in sewing at an early age, watching her mother make moccasins. As her skills grew, she began sewing dresses for her younger sisters.

Born at an Innu Camp near Gull Island, Labrador,

Andrew went to school in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and later settled with her husband in the Innu community of Sheshatshiu. In the early 1970s, Andrew's sewing skills and her love of her people and the Innu culture fostered her interest in making tea dolls. She met up with Maggie Antoine, a traditional craftsperson from her father's community of Davis Inlet, and watched her make dolls.

"The Innu way is to learn by watching," says Andrew as she stuffs a cotton body with black tea, presses it down and repeats the process until the body is rock hard. Then she adeptly sews up the top of the head, pressing down on each stitch until the seal is perfect.

Andrew's dolls are unique and meticulously detailed: the female figure with its cotton dress and apron and layers of flannelette underclothes; face, hands and moccasins sewn with home-smoked caribou hide; black yarn hair with beaded ties topped with a traditional felt hat; cradling an infant, wrapped in cloth and caribou hide.

"People used to dress up this way for special ceremonies, like the drum dance," says Andrew, recalling the traditions of her youth. For her, making these dolls are a way of keeping traditions alive and encouraging a younger generation to learn about their history. For collectors, they are simply one-of-a-kind treasures.



Innu Tea Doll by master craftsperson, Angela Andrew

# EXTRA! EXTRA!

## Help Spread the MESSAGE!



There's so much more happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, more than we can possibly fit into a newsletter. For more information about what's happening in our province, please check out our website at [www.theambassador.ca](http://www.theambassador.ca) for additional stories. And while you're there, don't forget to sign up for the Ambassador e-news.

Thank you for reading this edition of The Ambassador newsletter. We are always looking for ways to reach as many people as possible with the good news about business in Newfoundland and Labrador. If this copy of The Ambassador was mailed to you, please pass it along, or request extra copies so you can help spread the news. If you're reading someone else's copy of the newsletter, contact us and we will put you on our mailing list. See our contact information below.

  
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